OUR LADY OF THE FIELDS

by

Frank R. Lawrence

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No 149

Madonna di Campiglio

OUR LADY OF THE FIELDS

ALSO

BITS

They rested there, escaped awhile
From cares that wear the life away.

WHITTIER

Madonna di Campiglio

OUR LADY OF THE FIELDS

ALSO

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BY

FRANK R. LAWRENCE

NEW YORK
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FOR MY GRANDCHILDREN

EVA
DAVID
JOSEPHINE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

When the Dolomites are spoken of, the reference usually intended is to the region of which Cortina may be said to be the centre, lying to the east of the railway which runs north and south from Innsbrück, through Botzen and Trient, to Verona, and which is reached from the north by Innsbrück, or from the south by Venice and Belluno.

Campiglio, and the places mentioned here, are west of the railway, and as yet are visited by few English people and hardly any Americans.

OUR LADY OF THE FIELDS

OUR LADY OF THE FIELDS

A YOUNG girl thought she saw the Virgin and Child descend at evening and rest below the mountain at the head of the valley. Night after night the vision came, and she told the priests, and they watched with her and saw it, too; and this went on until they felt moved to build a monastery upon the spot. But the land was poor, the people were few, and the task was hard, till the angels came and helped in the work, which by that or other means was completed, as good works often are, it is not easy to say how. And the building, in the midst of a beautiful solitude, was long a place of retreat for holy men. But at last great wars arose, the songs of praise were no longer heard among the hills, and the good monks were driven from

their home, which now, by a curious change, has become a resting-place for strangers.

Such is the legend of Madonna di Campiglio, gathered from the peasants who live near.

I

The place is in a high Tyrolean valley, five thousand feet above the sea, and entirely surrounded by mountains. The valley slopes gently toward the south. At the north it is sheltered by a ridge of Monte Nambino; at the right, as the south is faced, and near at hand, are hills covered with fir trees, beyond which appear some of the summits of the Presanella. At the left stands Monte Spinale, two thousand feet over the valley. Not far down, a tiny pond furnishes what Ruskin calls "the eye of the landscape," without which no landscape can be complete; and further to the south majestic Sabione rises, tranquil mountain of the middle distance,

beautifully verdant. Some peaks of the Brenta group appear at Sabione's left, touched here and there with snow, and complete the circle of the hills which shut out the world beyond.

The valley, with a profusion of wild flowers, is clothed in a full and perfect green, the hills near by are made darker by the trees which cover their sides, and the verdure of the fields and the deeper color of the hills above blend in shades like richest velvet, soothing and full of repose.

The changing colors can nowhere be more soft or beautiful, and an atmosphere exhilarating as champagne, and delicate as its rarest vintage, is the crowning glory of this delightful place.

II

OR a morning walk, take the Faulenzer Weg (Lazy Way) a short distance over a rising meadow, rich with wild crocuses and blue-bells, and bor-

dered with the Alpen rose, past the little pond which sparkles in the sunlight; then go, if you like, for miles along an almost level path, through pine woods whose fragrance gives life, and whose trees trace alternate sun and shadow.

You soon appear to have attained a considerable height; but you have not been ascending—the valley has fallen away. Ere very long a spot of white appears far in the west; it increases at every step, until presently there comes into full view the Lares Glacier, the great snow-field of the Adamello group, grand and gleaming in perpetual white. No matter how bright the day, almost always some cloud, large or small, rests upon the Adamello and discharges its snowy contents. Sometimes, after a strong wind, marks are left upon the snow, like enormous footprints, as though a giant had passed in the night, stepping from mountain to mountain.

The valley at your feet is verdant; so are the intervening hills. But the snow on

the Adamello lends no harshness to the scene; and you go on, and on, for the walk is neither long nor fatiguing, meeting every now and then pass-walkers with a cheerful "Morgen," or a peasant with a civil "Giorno" (for the South Tyrolean peasant will not admit a knowledge of German even when he has it); and as you seem to mount higher, but in reality do not, you view the increasing charms of the valley, which more and more unfold below, until as you turn a corner it is difficult to restrain an exclamation. For in an instant there burst upon the sight the pinnacles of the Brenta Dolomites, in all their rugged glory.

And here you rest, and well you may! There is spread before you a view never to be forgotten, and rarely to be surpassed. Your coign of vantage is a seat bathed in sunshine. All about are woods of fragrant pine. The valley has now opened up for miles, showing verdant fields, clumps of trees, groups of grazing cows whose bells

you faintly hear, and scattered houses of the peasants who keep the cattle; and the view terminates far, far away, in a little triangle of brightest green, where a low spur of Monte Sabione intervenes and prevents your seeing what lies further on.

At the right, across the fertile valley, beyond hills of green pine and gray stone, rises Adamello, in snowy purity. Just before, and to the south, stands Sabione, like a great, deep emerald; and to the east, as far round as the eye can reach, are the peaks of the Brenta, forming a huge amphitheatre, covered half-way up with pines, and, above the tree line, storm-swept gullies with patches of snow, and rocks torn by time and the wind into the fantastic shapes which characterize the Dolomites.

Here have I sometimes sat in the full summer sunshine and watched a furious snowstorm on the Adamello or the Brenta. Yet the peaks and snow-fields, fine as they are, only assist; they do not dominate the scene. And upon a summer's day, it speaks

to the beholder not of grandeur, but tranquillity. The many shades of green, bright in the open spaces, mellow where the sun strikes the wooded hills directly, and darker where the trees are in shadow, combine and make a harmonious picture, set off and heightened by Adamello's snow and Brenta's gray rocks.

Though much among the Dolomites, it has never been my fortune to behold the colors spoken of by many writers as being so vivid and splendid, especially at sunset; yet I ask for nothing finer than this.

But the hotel is not yet two miles distant; the path is easy, and as you continue your stroll, Brenta's beauties are more lavishly displayed, while those of Adamello become less distinct as the direction changes. The path, after being open for a short time, becomes more wooded; the sunlight grows less, the shadows deepen. You stop to drink from a little rill which trickles from the hillside, coming from Monte Sabione, far above, and every now and

then the sense is delighted by the perfume of the pines.

And now fresh music bursts upon the ear. Thus far you have listened to the wind among the trees, and the bells upon the distant cows; but now a deeper note is heard, and as you pause to rest again you obtain the first view, always fascinating, of a waterfall which bears a part of the snows of the Brenta to the stream which will carry them to the river, thence to be borne to the Adriatic, not so far away; perchance to be drawn upward and precipitated again. And still you go on. The hills take different shapes at every step, and their beauty never lessens. The sound of the waterfall grows larger, richer, deeper; and as you approach it more nearly you rest again where a huge tree meets an overhanging rock, and a tablet commemorates the work of a gentleman, Dr. Eduard Pfeiffer, who has done much to make access easy to the beauties of this place.

Now the path descends. As you approach

the waterfall the trees become more dense; and here, if you will, drinking in the music and the beauty of the surroundings, you may remain alone with your thoughts for uncounted hours, realizing the ideal of the poet,

"To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene."

And if you like, and are oblivious of time, you may go right on to the waterfall, and to another, and still another, until you reach the green Kaiserin-Friedrich-Platz, far below; or at the Pfeiffer tablet, where several paths diverge, you may take the Bear's Path (Bären Weg), which leads above the waterfall, and go up and up, seeing each time you turn new tints of violet, purple and blue, not less fine than those seen by the imagination of Mrs. Browning in the woods of her Lady Geraldine; and presently you reach the Malga (Milking House) Vallesinella di Sopra, a hut of grandiose name. And as you go further, the

blue-bells become richer, the scenery grows more wild, the tinklings from the cows more distant, and the brooks of greater number; and it is only necessary to continue to reach the Tuckett Hütte, a refuge among the snows, named after one of the first Englishmen who explored these wilds.

But there has been enough of loveliness for a morning, and you turn home.

III

TO-DAY the hills do not stand out so clearly. There has been a change in the light. The sun is shining, but more softly, and there are shades upon Sabione and her companions, which do not lessen their beauty.

For an afternoon walk, you take the west side of the valley, across the rich pasture, over a bridge at a little stream which is singing merrily, stopping to admire the crocus-strewn grass, the cattle grazing

contentedly, and the shadows down the valley, now almost gray, and now a deeper purple.

You enter the path leading to the Panorama Way, walking amid the pines, through places sometimes dark and solemn, at others bright enough to admit the full sunlight, by a small moraine or two, and over a narrow causeway, where cows seem to dispute the passage, but amiably yield the way. And so you go along the pleasant open path, passing a little restaurant, very primitive in appearance, but where in the afternoon a comely *fraülein* dispenses tea and coffee which would do credit to many a grand establishment.

The path rises, and you look across the valley to the scene of yesterday. Now the hills are seen from the opposite side. The Adamello is for the present out of sight. The light falls differently upon the Brenta. Its snow now seems gray, its rocks a deeper gray. Sabione, usually bright, appears subdued, and every now and then, as a cloud

passes before the sun, a veil of richest purple is thrown across the scene.

The way leads through more woods, by waterfalls and amid sensuous pines. From this side of the valley you see further into the Brenta amphitheatre. If the day were dark, its towers and battlements would stand against the sky, terrible and grim; but now all is bathed in a flood of softest light; gray—oh, such mellow, lucent gray; changing sometimes imperceptibly into other hues. The valley traversed yesterday is visible from this hillside. As you ascend, or rather as the land appears to fall away, the view becomes more and more extended. The Kaiserin-Friedrich-Platz comes into sight, a spot of brilliant green. The little triangle which closed the prospect yesterday is larger, and by going on you see beyond it toward the villages of Carisolo and Pinzolo.

Passing a little half perpendicular field, where an entire family, men, women and children, are industriously reaping a small

crop of grain, you leave the main path and go up a hill toward the Malga Milana, and lie down upon the soft grass amid the ferns and flowers, tiny white and yellow stars, blue-bells and purple heather, to rest and listen to the music of a little waterfall at your side;—such a busy little waterfall, rushing and bustling, with not a moment to lose, on its way to the valley, just as convinced as men are that all the world depends upon its reaching its goal without delay, and, again like men, only to be lost and swallowed up as the goal is reached.

And you lie so long and so quietly that at last it comes almost as a surprise to look up and find the magnificent sweep of mountains still in view. But there they are, Brenta and Sabione—and Adamello, which has again come into sight, and great white cloud masses sail lazily overhead, and in spite of the pure blue sky beyond, snow seems to be falling on some of Brenta's domes.

IV

A FEW miles down the valley, in the shadow of one of the mountains of the Adamello group or range, lies the village of Pinzolo. It has lately been almost destroyed by fire. Its humble inhabitants possessed next to nothing, but in a moment there was taken from them that which they had.

A short quarter of a mile outside the village stands the small church of St. Vigilio, and three or four hundred years ago something led an artist, now unknown, to paint upon its wall a representation of a "Todtentanz," a favorite subject at that period.

No matter what stirring events have been transpiring in the outer world, what wars have raged, what kings have conquered or what dynasties have fallen; during all the time, for nearly four hundred years, nothing has ever disturbed this little spot, nor

has the grim figure upon the wall of this small church ever ceased for a day to lead forth in turn a pope, a bishop, a priest, a king, a soldier, a lady, a young maiden or a little child, one by one, into the wild mazes of the Dance of Death, while all the time the skeleton players played ghostly music!

And there the painting stands to-day. It has been but little damaged by time, and is likely to last for centuries to come, while history goes on, with its continuous repetition.

V

SHORT two miles above Campiglio lies the Campo Carlo Magno (Field of Charles the Great).

The ascent by the main highway is easy, and is dotted every few feet by the square posts of stone which mark the military roads in this and neighboring countries for hundreds—indeed, thousands—of miles.

The new hotel looks out upon the large undulating plain, entirely different from any other space for very many miles, which, with a few small intervening ridges, extends to the foot of the Brenta group, which here attains a height of eight or nine thousand feet. The mountains rise almost perpendicularly; they are bald, bare, desolate; real Dolomites, composed of lime and magnesium, such as must have delighted the heart of M. Dolomieu, if he ever saw these particular specimens of the hills to which he gave his name. The scene, though bleak, usually gains life from a large herd of cows, either grazing, or coming to drink at the little pond in the middle of the plain. At Campiglio, the tone is one of pastoral quiet; here it is one of grandeur.

Did the Emperor Charlemagne, a thousand years ago, as the legend tells, encamp an army on this spot? If not, whence the name by which the place seems to have been known from immemorial time? We

know that Charles assumed the Lordship of the Mountain Land, as this country was then called, for the name "Tyrol" had not then come into use; and the place seems admirably suited for a military camp. Seated here, you may try to imagine a feudal encampment of the early middle ages,—the archaic weapons and costumes, horses gaily caparisoned and mail-protected, bowmen and spearmen, knights and nobles in richest armor, and Charles himself in regal splendor on his way over the Alps into Italy. And may not the incomparable knight, Roland, the Paladin, just from the side of the beauteous Hildegunde, have been here among the host? Who knows?

But whatever of military pageantry Brenta's rocks may for one brief moment have beheld, to-day they smile or frown, as sun is succeeded by shade, upon a scene solitary, grand, severe.

Assuredly this was in former times, as it is now, one of the passes leading into

Italy, to Tirano, to Brescia, to Milan. To the non-military observer it would seem to have been easier to pursue the comparatively level road now followed by the railway, down by the beautiful Lake of Garda, and so on to the great Lombardy plain, by Verona, than to transport an army over these mountains. But when this is suggested to those whose opinion carries weight, they reply that in olden days the plains were difficult to pass because of morasses and floods, while the castles of the nobles upon the lower hills were numerous enough and strong enough to impede even a powerful army.

VI

ROM the Campo Carlo Magno many paths lead in as many directions. In half an hour you may be far away in woods so deep as almost to cause a

shiver. In another half hour you may be well up toward Brenta's bare rocks and patches of snow.

A delightful path, nearly level, is the Marcella Sembrich Way, named after the charming singer, said to be a native of Tyrol. Upon the Sembrich Way you seem almost at the base of the Brenta, though it is really a mile or two distant. In an open glade along this path is found a variety of great thistle, extremely rare. The flowers are of unusual size, sumptuous in purple and gray, lolling indolently in all sorts of attitudes, all about the lovely glade, secure in the right of possession, and confident of being undisturbed.

The path along the Sembrich Way grows more wild and romantic. It leads past rushing streams and little cascades, and ascends to the Malga Malghetto di Sotto, where from an elevated plateau there is a truly noble view of the Brenta Dolomites, perhaps more extensive than any yet seen.

The cowherd here, a rather spiritless fel-

low, inveighing against his compulsory service in the army, and living, free from care, in the most exhilarating atmosphere and with the most delightful prospect always spread before him, is yet unhappy in his lot. Curiously enough, with cows on every side, he had no milk; yet over his rough but excellent coffee we sat for an hour and discussed the woes of humanity and the wrongs perpetrated by kings. Our language, or rather his language, for our dialogue was mainly a monologue, consisted of much Italian, with a little German, even a trifle of English, and many crude but expressive signs upon both sides, sufficiently indicative of mutual sympathy.

Another half hour over a good but stony path brings into sight the lovely little Malghetto See, truly a beautiful solitude. Its surface, unruffled by any wind, is surrounded by mountains on every side except the east, and there, at the only opening, is a fine view of the Brenta group, including some peaks of what seems like red sand-

stone, in contrast to the gray tones of the rest of the Brenta formation.

At the outlet of the lake, a little cascade as usual sings its way along, and this and the bells upon the distant cows are the only sounds.

VII

 N this country every little pool is called a "See," which seems odd until the ear becomes accustomed to the term.

The Nambino See is two miles or so northwest from Campiglio, and a little further from the Campo. If you go the latter way, a fine view of Campiglio and the valley in which it lies soon tempts you to rest and admire; and whichever way you take, the path lies, for most of the distance, through beautiful pine woods. After a time you approach the lake, and are greeted as usual by the pleasant sound of falling water. The lake, a little basin, is entirely

shut in by hills, like many another mountain pool near by. The scene has become wild, weird, forbidding; and when the day is cloudy, especially if you are alone and with night coming on, you may conjure up all manner of unearthly things.

So strange and spectral do the trees and rocks appear in the dim light that you may imagine yourself

> ". . . down by the dank tarn of Auber
> In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

And you are glad to escape from the deep woods and go back to Campiglio by another path, the steep Molfetta Way, and the Hedwig Way, again through odorous pines, again by rippling waters, along the bank of a delightful stream and passing near the Malga (Milking House) Nambino. The word "Malga," until one grows familiar with its use, seems rather to carry a sinister sound than to indicate the homely purpose for which the place is meant.

VIII

THUS far all the walks have been mere easy strolls. But some radiant morning, after a storm has cleared the air, off we go to one of the higher levels, perhaps on foot, perhaps upon a stalwart mule or a little mountain horse, scarcely larger than a full-sized sheep; perhaps up Monte Spinale, just at the east of the hotel, where an hour's journey leads to a broad level space upon this mountain mass, which commands a fine prospect of the Brenta and the Care Alto, and where the edelweiss still grows in abundance.

But if more ambitiously inclined, let the start be made, say, for the Grosté Pass. The road leads over Carlo Magno, into and through the deep, beautiful woods; the path goes up, never steep or difficult, but always up and up. Presently the summits of the Ortler group appear, highest of all Tyrolean mountains, brilliant with snow; a little

later, the Care Alto and all the Adamello field; and as we stop to rest, a mile or two before reaching the summit, these, with the Presanella and the Brenta peaks, make a crown of glory, a snow-tipped diadem glittering all around the horizon.

As we ascend, the woods cease, the rocks are bare, breathing grows less easy, and it is well to keep on the hither side of Baedeker's time-honored rule—not more than sixty steps to the minute.

At the summit, at the Rifugio Stoppani, the little house, or *hütte,* maintained by the Alpine Club of Trient, the view, because of some rocks near at hand, is not quite as extensive as at some distance below. Here dwells a little family, in solitary grandeur, and we dine healthfully, but frugally. The air creates a wondrous appetite; and it is as the man said—"Nothing tastes so good as what you eat yourself."

Now the distant mountains have lost the circular aspect, and all save Brenta appear as though nearly in a straight line, with

snow upon their summits, and below the snow-line all manner of soft tones, purple and varying shades of green, nearly black over some of the forest growths, and bright in the valleys, where sometimes there are little fields.

At the Refuge Hütte we are almost under one of the peaks of the Mondifra, a part of the Brenta group, destitute of snow, but worn and driven by the wind into all manner of shapes; and then, after a twenty minutes' further climb over rocks of flint, but with little blue stars of flowers forcing their way through the smallest crevices, we sit under the signal-staff at the summit of the Grosté Pass, more than eight thousand feet above the sea.

The view again expands into a circle, a little broken by two or three jagged peaks close by. But it is infinitely more grand and magnificent than before; for here we see, not only Adamello and Presanella, comparatively near, and the Ortler group as well, but far away to the north and east,

beyond intervening valleys and villages and lesser ranges of hills, there rise the Stubaier group and the Gross Venediger; even the Gross Glockner lifts its graceful, snowy summit into the sky many, many miles away; and Monte Antelao appears, like a great irregular cloud, far off near Cortina, keeping watch and ward over the marvelous Ampezzo Thal, and in the midst of the better known and more frequently visited Dolomitic formations.

Having seen all this upon a rare and glorious day, with not a cloud in the sky, we turn and slowly retrace our steps, satiated with so much splendor, and feeling it a relief to come again within Campiglio's homelike influence.

IX

HE little balcony from which these lines are written looks down the lovely valley and commands a view of all its restful beauty.

The sun sets early here, passing behind the hills in the west. Soon come the evening shades; and sometimes at Campiglio, when the night is fine, the stars stand out so clearly that you almost seem able to see around and behind them, and into the firmament beyond.

On an August evening there is the giant Jupiter at the south, dominating the valley; overhead, the not less brilliant Vega, with her companions of the Lyre. Great Arcturus and the lovely star-field of Berenice are "sloping slowly to the west"; the North Star is pointed to, as in American skies, and all the old marvels are just where we are accustomed to see them.

Soon after midnight Fomalhaut takes the place of Jupiter down the valley; and as the night begins to wane, the gentle Pleiades appear over Brenta's peaks, followed by Aldebaran in splendid glory, and Orion's magnificent train, and later lovely Venus comes to tell you that the dawn is near.

Night after night the wonderful proces-

sion passes, here as elsewhere, as it has done for countless, unnumbered centuries, yet not one person in a thousand takes the time to regard it, or gives it more than a moment's thought.

One night, at least, I lay in the valley, beyond the glare of the hotel's electric lights, wrapped in rug and Austrian loden coat, watching the marvelous spectacle, assisted by a chart of the skies and little electric torch, until, long before the morning,

> "the soft veil of dreams
> Round Truth poetic, witching Fancies wreathed."

Slumber overcame me, and I went in some time after daylight, to be greeted by the startled *kammermädchen* with a timid inquiry as to whether the "Hochgeboren nicht schlafen kann," her simple, natural view being, no doubt, that night was made for sleep, without reference to the wonders of the universe.

X

My balcony opens from what is said to have been in monastic days the abbot's room, but which for the moment might, with an apology to Shakespeare, be called "Friar Laurence's cell." The building is very old, though giving little sign of age. It is simple, and with massive walls, not by any means as picturesque as might be expected, and the cells of the monks make comfortable bedrooms. Curiously, there are no stairs to connect the first and second stories of the old structure; the second story can be reached from the first only by going out of the old building and through a wing of more recent construction.

What the arrangement may formerly have been it is difficult to say. But the absence of stairs was perplexing, until one day, inquiring why the iron gratings at the windows of the ground floor, I was told

that not only monks, but at one time, long ago, a sisterhood of nuns abided here, and it soon occurred to the mind that the absence of stairs, making approach difficult, may have served the useful purpose of guarding the pious brethren against being disturbed in their meditations. Perhaps a wise precaution,

> "If ancient tales say true,
> nor wrong those holy men."

But now, alas! the curse of improvement threatens the spot. There is talk (and may it be only talk!) of pulling the old building down to make way for a modern structure. The hard-boiled shirt and the gorgeous lady have already appeared, traveling, as usual, hand in hand. The proprietor may find it necessary to yield to the demand, and the old hospice may have to go. For, come what may, the American visitor must have his bath. And this recalls a story told a few years ago of the manager of a hotel at one of the German seaports. A shipload of Americans ar-

rived one afternoon in the height of summer, and one after another demanded "Zimmer mit Bad—Zimmer mit Bad." In a few minutes every room with a bath was taken, but the cry continued. The manager was in despair, which soon changed to indignation, and presently he exclaimed satirically, "Wir müssen nächstes Jahr für diese Amerikaner ein Aquarium haben!"

Must it not often seem to the Continental mind that American and English people would find their greatest enjoyment in swimming about the livelong day in a tank, like a company of seals!

XI

FTER weeks amid these mountains, which grow more lovely all the time, the day for departure comes; and this time the journey is made up the hill to Carlo Magno, then down through rows of stately pines to Dimaro, passing the turn which leads by the Tonale

Pass into Italy a few short miles away, and on over the broad, fertile table-land, enclosed on both sides by glorious mountains, to Male and toward the Mendel Alp.

The day is filled with fresh delights. The great distant hills lend grandeur. Near at hand the fields are vividly green, in mosaics of many shades. Little *campanili* rise here and there, and the landscape seems Italian in all its features.

At times great chasms appear, with rushing streams, far below, of a curiously opaque blue, dashed with foam of purest white. Vineyards are terraced far above and far below the road, which often takes unexpected turns, and brings new prospects into view, both near and distant. There are journeys in the Tyrol which are more grand, others more striking. The drive from Campiglio to Riva by Condino and the Ponale Strasse, or that from Toblach to Cortina, can hardly be surpassed; yet it may be doubted whether a day's journey can anywhere be found more satisfying to

the eye than that from Campiglio to the Mendel Alp on a fine day in the early autumn.

But do not go in an automobile, I pray. No one ever in reality saw anything from an automobile. The ideal way to enjoy the scenery would be to cast time to the winds and go in an ox-cart. Take a pair of sleek, patient, fawn-colored oxen, put garlands about their horns if you like, throw a mattress or two upon the rough cart, with a few pillows and rugs, and go like a king in state!

But if you are merely commonplace, and cannot rise to so great a height, go in a carriage—never in an automobile; and whatever your vehicle, buy a trumpet, of the sort used by motorists in this country, and sound it loudly at every curve, that the fiend rushing from the opposite direction may take you for one of his kind, and be disposed to give you a little better chance for your life!

If only a day is taken for the drive, in the

afternoon the gradual ascent of the Mendel is made, over a broad, easy road, and the journey ends at the summit, where the night is to be spent, before leaving the glorious Mountain Land and going the next morning by the cable railway down to the plain at Botzen, quaint little city of the Middle Ages, thence, an hour's journey, through a land flowing with milk and honey, indescribably rich in vineyards and orchards, to eat the grapes at Meran.

XII

ELIGHTFUL Tyrol! much too beautiful for words, and whose people are not yet wholly spoiled by contact with the outer world. As we journey through your mountains or across your valleys, many little villages appear, some of them incredibly small, each perched almost inaccessibly upon its rock, and seemingly cut off from other habitations of men.

There the women, as they have done for uncounted generations, give their lives to homely duties, drawing water from the village well in copper vessels, long used by their mothers in bygone times; and the men labor in the fields and in the woods, as their fathers have done from the beginning.

In these eyries, remote as the nests of the eagles, people are born, and live and die, without ever leaving their native confines. Each little hamlet is a sphere sufficient to itself, and contact with the outer world is hardly known, save when some young man returns from his military service to tell, or try to tell, in uncouth style what he has seen.

So small, so self-centred, yet so complete in themselves are these very tiny communities as almost to suggest a comparison with drops of water, peopled perchance with busy microscopic creatures sentient as ourselves, each deeming its own concerns of universal consequence, and neither knowing nor caring for aught beyond.

XIII

ND now farewell, for a time at least, to Campiglio, its delicious air, its soft sunshine, its lovely mountains and its happy valley. And, friend (and these pages, to while away a summer hour, are written only to and for friends), if ever in the pilgrimage your steps should turn, as mine have often done, to this land of great delight, and to the place about which I have written, try while here to forget your cares, yield something to the kindly aspect of the spot, and remember that neither grandeur nor beauty, but peace, repose, tranquillity, make the real charm of Madonna di Campiglio, Our Lady of the Fields.

BITS

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the
open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading
wherever I choose.

WALT WHITMAN

PREFACE

(*Does anybody ever read a preface?*)

OST books begin at the beginning, which is silly, for any book can do that.

A book might be made to begin at the end, but that would only turn things upside down.

Another way would be to begin in the middle; but then it would be perplexing to know whether to go forward or back.

So this book begins nowhere in particular, which is much the best of all.

BITS

SAYS Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians:—"I have fought with beasts at Ephesus."

I have fought with their descendants all over Italy.

* * * *

ONE very wet and dismal day at Baden Baden, I asked the porter at the hotel, "Porter, what do people do here on a wet day like this?"

He replied, "Well, sir, they annoy themselves."

Every one knows the effect of bad weather when traveling about and trying to see and do things, and it seemed to me that, consciously or unconsciously, the porter had

described the state of mind at such times so perfectly that what he said should not be lost.

 t was in the Square in the quaint little city of Trient, Italian in everything except political allegiance. Some poor little girls, ragged and unwashed, yet very happy and very pretty, were dancing under the electric light, to the music of a song which they sang, an air which I finally recognized as a curious minor variation of the old "Santa Lucia," familiar for so many years.

The dance over, two or three of them, standing near me, began to recite little prayers, first crossing themselves, then holding their hands in an attitude of devotion. The effect was touching, and when they stopped I produced some *hellers* (the *heller* is about one fifth of a cent), and gave them to the nearest child, who seemed

an embodiment of grace. In her eagerness she dropped them, and they disappeared in the sand. In a despairing tone she cried, *"Trovate! Trovate!"* ("Find! Find!") All joined in a search, which was unavailing, and consternation reigned. But more *hellers* were found, and happiness was restored.

Most people who go abroad, especially into the byways, have been warned that their letters should never bear the word "Esquire," as it is likely to be taken for the name, with the result that the letter will be placed in the "E" box, and be seen no more.

An instance a little in point came under my observation recently in South Austria. The proprietor of a hotel, wishing to provide a library for his English-speaking guests, had bought a large number of volumes of the paper-covered Tauchnitz edi-

tion, and had evidently given them to a local binder to be bound in cloth, with the name of the book and the name of the author upon the back of each. I found myself looking at some volumes, the names upon which—"Windsor Castle," "The Constable of the Tower," and so on—seemed very familiar, but the name of the author was given simply as "Esquire." Opening one of the books, the title-page gave the explanation. The books were by "W. Harrison Ainsworth, Esquire." The Austrian binder had taken the last word for the name of the author, and had placed it upon the back of every volume of the set!

* * * *

HAT strange coincidence or process of the mind has led two great peoples, far apart, and whose institutions and ideas differ widely, to adopt the same symbol to characterize that which

they value—and indeed reverence—more highly than any other earthly thing? In Austria the sign is "K K," and you see it upon all sides. It means "Kaiserlich und Königlich" (Imperial and Royal). You can never escape it. If you ride upon a railway, or buy a cigar, or send your clothes to a laundry, it is always under this mystic symbol, and "K K" is everywhere.

In America, though not so prominently displayed before the eye, whatsoever is imperial or royal, whatsoever upon earth is thought worthy of reverence or homage, is represented by and concentrated in the same kingly token,—signifying, in our country—no American need be reminded what!*

* Trying this jest, if such it be, upon a foreign friend of brilliant intellect and distinguished in the service of his country, he was disposed to regard it as a mathematical problem, and was ready to attack it with pencil and paper. Seemingly he was unacquainted with the high place occupied by the "cold cash" in the American esteem.

 HEN you listen to Wagner's music or hear the story of Siegfried, accept the legend, but do not take it too seriously. Undoubtedly Siegfried did bathe in the blood of the drâgon, until he became, or thought he became, invulnerable or immortal.

I have done it myself, both in years long gone by, and again more lately. And you may do the same if only the vintage lasts.

The Drachenblut, (blood of the dragon) is a pink champagne, rather like a sparkling Burgundy, which grows in small quantity only upon the mountain, the Drachenfels, which is the scene of the legend, and where the cave of the dragon is still shown. Any one who will drink enough of it will become as invulnerable as Siegfried.

I well remember the way in which the young wife of the innkeeper of the days of long ago replied to my question, whether some of this delicious little vintage could not be sent to America. It was too delicate

to bear transportation across the sea. To tell me this, she said, "Ah, it would break its heart to go away from home!"

* * * *

VERY one knows the two lines with which Byron begins the last canto of his "Childe Harold,"—

"I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;
A palace and a prison on each hand."

If ever any lines were hackneyed and done to death, these have been; they make a pretty, musical jingle, nothing more. The next two lines are finer; but in those which come after, lines which nobody ever quotes, and which seem to have passed comparatively without notice,—

"A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying glory smiles
O'er the far times,"—

Byron fell completely under the influence of the beautiful, pathetic place. He de-

picted at a stroke its mystical charm, and his genius found one of its noblest expressions.

Whenever I am in Venice, this fine figure of speech is constantly in my mind, and I seem to feel the beating of the cloudy wings and see in all about me the plaintive smile of the dying glory.*

★
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THE Venetian guide is a patrician; he will not go out at night, and rambling about the place after dark, I have been forced to go alone, which

*Here is the entire stanza:

"I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;
A palace and a prison on each hand:
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Look'd to the winged Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!"

is neither safe nor wise, or to take such man as I could get.

Thus one evening I went forth with nothing to do, and a guide who spoke no English, only Italian and some German. The gondola stopped for a moment at a little quay, and the man spoke to a group of girls. I asked, "Who are the young ladies?" He replied, "My sister and her friends." I asked, "Would they like to go for a ride?" Indeed they would—and without more ado the entire party, four or five young Venetian girls, tripped into the gondola and saluted me affably. We went to the Lido, three quarters of an hour away. My companions chattered all the time, and on arriving we all went on shore. Places of entertainment were close by, and this led to the question, "Will the young ladies have some refreshments?" Assuredly. And what would they like? What do you suppose? Not ice-cream, Miss American Girl; not cake or soda-water or lemonade. They wanted a real treat, something to which

they were not accustomed, and the cry went up with one acclaim, "Carne! Carne!"—meaning flesh—meat. By the bright light indoors I saw them clearly for the first time. All were girls of the working class, poorly dressed but scrupulously clean, and wearing, as characteristic of their station, a mantilla, or little black shawl, over the head. Meat was brought in abundance; they were invited to partake. I stood and watched while these poor girls satisfied their hunger; and from the ravenous way in which they ate, I felt sure that not one of them had ever before had all the meat her appetite craved.

The repast over, we returned to Venice. On the way back they sang for my delectation, in a tongue to me unknown, a song of which the refrain, as they rendered it, was "Beely weely wink"; and I really think they thought that they were singing in English.

We followed a serenade up the Grand Canal for a short distance, and at the little

quay I received their thanks and we parted, they perhaps to reflect upon their wonderful banquet, and I to think of the glimpse I had had of Venetian life among the poorer class.

* * * *

GOING one hot morning into the dining-room of the hotel at Venice, I was more than usually impressed with the need for ventilation. You know that many Europeans entertain the view that fresh air is deadly poison. One side of the room opened upon one of the little three-foot alleys which in Venice pass as streets; the windows were protected by iron bars and tightly closed. I asked the head waiter why he did not open them. He answered in a melancholy tone, "Ah, you can never tell what they will t'row in; it

was last week a cat—*morto.*" What waste! A perfectly good cat, only it was dead.

★
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IT was in Rome. We were at the Palazzo Spada, to see what is really a remarkable perspective effect in the painting of some columns, and we passed into a room with red hangings all about, seats arranged in semicircles, and having the general appearance of some sort of legislative chamber; in fact, I believe it is, or was, used for the meetings of a branch of the municipal government.

The young lady was in advance, listening to the explanations of our guide, an archæologist of some repute. I was occupied with my own thoughts. What he said sounded as though a long way off, and made little impression on me. He talked about a statue in the room—you know statues are everywhere in Rome; and suddenly one of

the most curious sensations I ever experienced came over me, as it filtered through my mind, partly from what the guide was saying, which I dimly heard, and partly through some subconscious mental process of my own, that I was in the presence of Pompey's statue, the very statue at whose foot Julius Cæsar was murdered some nineteen hundred years ago! Not often have I been so moved. The room, with its red hangings and its benches, lent itself well to the idea of a senate-house. It needed no very vivid imagination to conjure up the great central figure in the tragedy; the group of relentless, murderous conspirators doing him to death, and the startled senators huddled about the room. Shakespeare's lines, without being bidden, forced themselves upon the mind:

". . . then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell."

I saw the tragedy a thousandfold more clearly than I had ever seen it enacted in early days, when Booth and Barrett were upon the mimic stage; and so real was the impression that it absorbed me for hours, almost days.

It cannot certainly be said that this is really the figure at whose base Cæsar died; though probably it is. It seems certain, though very curious, that it is the only statue of Pompey in all Rome. The French used it in the production of Voltaire's tragedy of "Brutus" in the Coliseum at the end of the eighteenth century, taking off one of the arms, and subsequently replacing it, that the figure might more conveniently be moved.

Byron, writing a hundred years ago, accepted it as authentic, saying,

> "And thou, dread statue, art existent in
> The austerest form of naked majesty."

Baedeker treats it with a mark of interrogation. Gibbon (Chapter LXXI) tells the

story of its being discovered lying upon the border-line which separated the land of two adjoining proprietors, the head upon the land of one man, the body upon that of the other, and of a lawsuit to decide its ownership, with the result that the head was awarded to one owner and the body to his adversary. To save the figure from mutilation, the Pope, Julius III, at the instance of Cardinal Capo di Ferro, bought the rights of both proprietors, and presented the statue to the cardinal who had interceded for its preservation.

Parts of several days spent in the library of the Vatican, with competent assistance, delving among books and manuscripts which I could not read, carried me no further back than to the earlier writers referred to by Gibbon, and in a copious note to Byron; and it seems safe to say that the statue has no ascertainable history anterior to the time of Pope Julius III, who reigned in the middle of the sixteenth century. But the manner in which this figure, of heroic

size, was found amid the rubbish of old Rome, and the fact that it is the only statue of Pompey in all that city, where statues are so many, certainly lend probability to the belief that this is indeed the identical figure at whose base was enacted the "lofty scene" which, in the words put by Shakespeare into the mouth of Casca, has so many times since been

"acted o'er
In states unborn, and accents yet unknown!"

* * * *

AGAIN in Rome. The Socialists, for no definite reason, but as a manifestation of power, had planned a round of events extending over a week, and somewhat in this wise: On Monday, they

said, no bread shall be baked in Verona; on Tuesday, not a gondola shall move in Venice; on Wednesday, nothing shall go on wheels in Rome, and so on through the week.

It was our last day in the Eternal City. We especially wanted to go once more to St. Peter's, the greatest and most glorious church in all the world. The driver who had been taking us about promised faithfully to come, but, doubtless influenced by the prospect of a broken head, failed to appear. Not a vehicle could be had. We started on foot, but the way was long, and the heat of the sun, although it was at the beginning of October, was pitiless. After going some distance, a butcher's cart appeared, drawn by a large donkey, driven by a boy. We said to our guide, "Hire that," to which he replied, "Oh, no; you cannot go in that." We personally took up the negotiation, and the boy, undismayed by thoughts of the Socialists, agreed to take us to St. Peter's. But he was faithful to

his employer, and in the cart were several pieces of meat. He would deliver those and then return for us. We knew that, once out of our sight, we should never see him again, so there was nothing for it but to get into the cart and go with him upon his errands. We invited the guide to get in with us. He refused scornfully, and with indignation in every tone. So he went in advance, and awaited us. We assisted in delivering the meat to the descendants of the Cæsars, and arrived in time at our destination. The guide so far unbent as to take our photograph in the vehicle, with the great church as a background, and it is safe to say that this is the only case of an American girl going in state to St. Peter's in a butcher's cart drawn by a donkey.

The next day, at Naples, the Socialists were pursuing their amiable programme with some other diversion, the soldiers were charging upon the mob in the street next our hotel, and Vesuvius, as though to show its sympathy with these activities, was be-

ginning one of the most important eruptions in modern times.

* * * * *

THE recent visit to this country of a beautiful vessel, used principally for deep-sea exploration, but fitted with much scientific apparatus and having among its wonders a means by which musical sounds are said to be transmitted for great distances, brought back to the memory some long-forgotten lines of Sir Walter Scott, who wrote in "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" about a famous sorcerer of the same surname, reputed to have lived some centuries before, that he was

> "A wizard of such dreaded fame,
> That when in Salamanca's cave
> Him listed his magic wand to wave,
> The bells would ring in Notre Dame!"
>
> *Canto II,* 13.

It may be wondered what Scott had in mind. What may he have heard, or read? What may have started the train of ideas which found expression in these lines? Perhaps they were evolved from nothing—right out of his imagination. Perhaps Scott may have been influenced by tales transmitted from mouth to mouth through unknown generations, much as Macpherson's "Ossian" is said to have been preserved.

When Scott wrote the "Lay," a little more than a hundred years ago, the things he ascribed to Michael Scott could only have been thought of as rank absurdities, utter impossibilities, the work of a poet's fancy.

A few score years previously, not only would such things have been considered sheer necromancy, but any one attempting to practise them would have received the punishment due to a professor of the black art.

Even when Scott wrote this poem, elec-

tricity was scarcely known. Electrical science had no existence for practical purposes, and it had had none in any times that we know about.

But now, when Walter Scott has been dead but eighty years, a man touches a button, and a fair is opened or an explosion is caused, hundreds of miles away; and in this day of long-distance telephones, wireless telegraphy, and musical sounds sent for miles through the air without visible apparatus connecting the sender and the listener, the ringing of the bells of Notre Dame by one at Salamanca might easily be accomplished.

The apparent impossibilities ascribed by the poet to the wizard in the quoted lines and in their context are every-day occurrences, and we are led to wonder whether our recently discovered marvels are now in use in the world for the first time, or whether there may not have been some admixture of fact with the poet's fancy; whether there may not have come down to

him some trace or thought or tradition of devices once used, but long lost and forgotten.

The student of history must often pause and wonder, not at the extent of our knowledge, but that we know so little of the past history of man.

The oldest historic event of which there is even a tolerably authentic record occurred but a very few thousand years ago, a minute fraction of the time during which man has been upon the earth. All the rest is lost. The few things we know about the distant past stand out like little islands in the vast sea of our want of knowledge. May not things seemingly purely fanciful, such as those conjured up by Scott for the purposes of his poem, have had some remote foundation in reality? Is there anything new under the sun?

How little we know! For example, to go back only two or three thousand years, read a verse in one of the least important books of the Old Testament, and you will find

yourself wondering whether there may not have been automobiles in ancient Nineveh.*

THOUGHT I caught a glimpse of Infinity. I lay upon a beach in Florida. Minute grains of sand forced their way into my garments, my pockets, my ears, into the works of my watch. I picked up a handful. There were many thousands, each capable of subdivision into its particles, its atoms. I looked, and for miles, as far as the eye could reach, there was an expanse of the same sand, the same grains. I knew that the beach, of the same formation, extended for hundreds of miles.

*The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. Nahum ii, 4.

Here, then, in every single mile—yes, in every foot—was infinite number. The grains in a handful could scarcely be counted. For the aggregate of those upon the shore we have no thought or expression which could depict their number, even in the faintest way. It would be hopeless to try, for their number is such as we cannot comprehend. We can see them, but can neither count nor understand them. They would be innumerable times as many as the number of all the men who have ever lived or ever will live upon the earth.

And I said to myself, "Here is infinity of number; we can see, though not describe it." And my thoughts turned to the bodies of the universe: far more than a million known stars, with others being constantly added to those which are known. Yet here, in a little corner of one of the least of these, was number beyond our ability to comprehend.

And I thought, How inconceivably vast

is the Creation, how tiny and incapable of comprehending it is man!

Well, what then?

* * * *

 ND here is a little *credo,* written by me, an atom lately called out of space, and soon to go back into it.

All the great things of life are mine: the sun, the sky, the stars, the trees; the running waters, and the winds that blow.

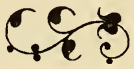
I have friendships, even affections.

But as to the little things, the trifles for which men and women wear out their lives and hearts and souls,—money to waste, a great estate, a fine mansion, large posses-

sions,—these I have not, nor do I covet them.

 MAN past the age of sixty may be likened to one who stands at the North Pole. At the pole there is no north, no east, no west; only south. And so with the man of sixty, there is but one direction—downward.

The things he has not achieved then, he is not likely to accomplish afterward. His failures and his successes alike seem trivial. Increasingly he values quiet and repose. And his growing wish is that the Lord, in the words of old John Evelyn, will grant him "a comfortable departure."



"Life is sweet, brother."

"Do you think so?"

"Think so!—There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?"

. . . . . .

"In sickness, Jasper?"

"There's the sun and stars, brother."

"In blindness, Jasper?"

"There's the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live forever."

George Borrow, "*Lavengro.*"

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